

## Letter to the Editor

### A History of Greece in One Page

(EDITOR'S NOTE: A Commentary by Prof. Fraser after his recent trip to Greece but before reading Prof. Enterpe Bazopoulou-Kyrkanidou's magistral "Myths and Logos in Hesiod's *Theogony*, circa 700 B.C.," [Am J Med Genet 62:125–144, 1996] an article he enjoyed and would like to have read before his trip.)

#### **To the Editor:**

Grecian culture began very B.C., in Crete and the surrounding islands, and for a while everyone got along just fine. There were no fortifications, or other signs of strife, and people just made love and pottery, not war. But the territorial instinct is strong, and as the culture spread to the mainland, the country became divided into various city states. Each had an acropolis, with a temple dedicated to one of their many gods and goddesses, all of whom seemed to be, for some reason, related to Zeus [Basopoulou-Kyrkanidou, 1996].

Taking inspiration from the behavior of the gods, the city states began employing violence and treachery to try and dispossess or destroy one another. They found this so exhilarating that they began to strive also against more distant neighbors, such as the Persians, Romans, and Turks. All this led to nothing but death and destruction—death of each other, and destruction of the many wonderful buildings and works of art they

had created. Although they invented the Olympic Games, which showed them that it *was* possible to live in harmony by mutual agreement, they paid no attention.

Eventually, they became fed up with their counter-productive behavior, and buried all the acropoli, tombs, and temples. Now they are getting along much better, occupying themselves by digging up again the remains of their former civilizations. The excavated statues provide much useful information about these civilizations. It's no wonder that so many men got killed, the way they ran around bare naked, brandishing swords and shields, without even a jockstrap for protection down there. We saw many who had, indeed, suffered penile amputations. There were also many cases of nasal destruction, presumably due to congenital syphilis, or leprosy. And many of the statues were malformed, with no head (anencephaly) or missing arms or legs (acheiropodia). Had the Greeks developed thalidomide? They certainly seemed to have developed genetic engineering. We saw statues of women with hen's feet, referred to as harpies, and men with horse's asses, termed centaurs. Other terms, not fit to mention, were applied to men who *were* horse's asses.

Anyway, the excavations are now a major attraction for tourists, who flock to Greece from all over the world, to be reminded of how silly it is to try and get along with your neighbors by killing them.

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